

**NACCP, FAMILIES FIGHTING FLU, AND THE
CHILDHOOD INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION COALITION TEAM UP TO
EDUCATE FAMILIES ABOUT ANNUAL CHILDHOOD FLU VACCINATION**

***New Survey Finds Misinformation, Concern among Mothers
Regarding Protecting Children from the Flu***

For Immediate Release

Austin, TX, November 12, 2008 – Today the National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP), Families Fighting Flu (FFF) and the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* are launching their second annual nationwide flu awareness campaign to educate parents about the seriousness of influenza in children, and increase influenza vaccination rates in more than 1,300 child care centers across the country. The program, “Fighting Flu in Child Care Settings: Building Blocks to Increase Influenza Awareness,” is being launched this flu season in conjunction with a new national survey of mothers of children in child care that revealed widespread confusion regarding how to protect children from the flu.

“Our campaign is especially important this year, as a new survey we conducted with Families Fighting Flu and the *CIIC* shows that many mothers who want to protect their loved ones from the flu are actually misinformed or unaware of the facts regarding flu vaccination in children,” said Sherry Workman, Executive Director/CEO, NACCP. “For example, the vast majority of mothers surveyed – 81 percent – did not know that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] recommends that all children aged six months through 18 years get vaccinated against the flu every year.”

Other surprising survey findings include:

- While 63 percent of mothers said they are concerned their children will catch influenza in the child care setting, 43 percent of all moms surveyed have NOT taken their children to get the flu vaccine within the past two years.
- Nearly half (47 percent) of mothers believe washing hands frequently is the most effective way to help prevent their families from catching influenza. The CDC recommends the flu vaccine as the most effective way to prevent the flu and help children – and their families, friends, teachers, child care providers, and communities – stay free of influenza during flu season every year.
- Among mothers surveyed who have not had their child(ren) vaccinated against the flu within the past two years, the most often cited reason (24 percent) is that their doctor did not tell them they need to get it.

About the Campaign

The “Fighting Flu in Child Care Settings: Building Blocks to Increase Influenza Awareness” campaign aims to supply child care providers in child care centers across the country with family-friendly tools and materials to help educate parents about the importance of annual influenza vaccination in children. By distributing campaign materials (posters, brochures, fact sheets) to parents and encouraging flu vaccinations, child care providers nationwide are helping to educate parents about the seriousness of influenza, and increase influenza vaccination rates among children in their centers. From October through the end of March, center directors will be individually tracking flu vaccinations for children within their centers and encouraging healthy preventative practices.

“Protecting kids in child care centers from the flu means a healthier child care center environment and potentially, a healthier community for all of us,” said Sherry Workman. “We were very pleased that 90 percent or more of children in many of our centers were vaccinated against the flu during last year’s campaign, and we are excited to be able to provide more education to help get even more children and families vaccinated against flu this season.”

About Kids and the Flu

Young children are much more likely than adults to get sick with the flu because of their less-developed immune systems. Children die every year in the United States from influenza and its complications; in fact, over the past five flu seasons nearly 400 children have died from influenza and its complications. And more than 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized due to influenza each year.

Since children in child care facilities spend a lot of time interacting with other kids and adults, it's especially important to teach child care providers and parents about preventive practices to help keep children healthy during flu season. About 41 percent of preschool children are cared for in organized child care settings at least part of the time, which means a considerable number of children are sharing toys and sharing germs. In addition, school-aged children also have the highest rate of influenza infection because of their close contact with friends and classmates who frequently spread germs among one another.

"Vaccinating children against the flu is the single best way to protect them and their families from the virus," said Richard Kanowitz, president of Families Fighting Flu. Kanowitz's four-year-old daughter, Amanda, died suddenly in March 2004 from influenza. "Unfortunately, many parents still don't know that the flu is far more serious than the common cold, and that it is likely to be prevented with a simple annual flu vaccination. I urge all parents to ask their doctor about childhood flu vaccination this flu season."

About Influenza

Influenza, or "the flu," is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs). The flu virus tends to spread from October to May, with most cases occurring in February. The flu is often confused with the common cold, but flu symptoms tend to develop quickly (usually one to four days after a person is exposed to the flu virus) and are usually more severe than the typical sneezing and congestion associated with a cold. Influenza is often accompanied with fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are also common symptoms in young children. A person infected with the flu virus will typically suffer from the illness for approximately seven to 10 days, with five to six days of limited activity and about three days of bed rest.

"It's so important for parents to know that the CDC recommends that all children six months through 18 years of age get vaccinated against the flu every year," said Dr. Carol J. Baker, National Foundation for Infectious Diseases immediate past president, *C/IC* moderator. "The bottom line is that anyone who wants to reduce his or her risk of becoming ill with influenza, or of spreading it to others, should get an annual influenza vaccination."

All household contacts (parents, grandparents, siblings, etc.) and caregivers of children age zero up to age five (especially younger than six months), adults 50 years and older, and persons with high-risk medical conditions should also get vaccinated against the flu every year.

About Families Fighting Flu, Inc.

Families Fighting Flu (FFF) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization established in 2004 that is made up of families and healthcare practitioners. Each family has experienced first-hand the death of a child due to the flu or has had a child experience severe medical complications from the flu. We are dedicated to educating people about the severity of influenza and the importance of vaccinating children against the flu every year. Through education and advocacy, we hope to improve the rates of childhood flu vaccinations and help reduce the number of childhood illnesses and deaths caused by the flu each year. For more information, visit www.familiesfightingflu.org or call 1-888-2ENDFLU.

About the National Association of Child Care Professionals

The National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP) is the nation's leader among associations serving child care owners, directors, and administrators. NACCP is committed to strengthening the skill level of leaders in the field of early child care and education. The organization's members believe that effective management is the critical link to superior child care and are striving to improve the quality of early child care and education. For more information, visit www.naccp.org or call 1-800-537-1118.

About the *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition*

The *Childhood Influenza Immunization Coalition (CIIC)* was established by the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) to protect infants, children and adolescents from influenza by communicating with "one strong voice" the need to make influenza immunization a national health priority. *CIIC* seeks to address and improve the low influenza immunization rates among children. Members represent more than 25 of the nation's leading public health, medical, patient and parent groups committed to protecting children's health and encouraging wellness. For more information, visit www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org or call 212-886-2277.

Online survey interviews were conducted with 755 mothers from across the U.S. who have at least one child eight years of age or younger who spends at least one hour per week in child care. Ipsos, a leading global research firm, conducted the interviews between August 13 and August 22, 2008.

This program is made possible by an unrestricted educational grant to Families Fighting Flu from sanofi pasteur.

###